

Annual Meeting of the North Parish

May 18, 2014

The Annual Meeting of the North Parish was called to order at 10:15 a.m. by the Moderator, Peter Race. 77 members were present and constituted the quorum required for normal transactions. The requirement of a 40% quorum (124 members) to vote on the conveyance of property in Article 4 was not met.

Since the Reverend Lee Bluemel was still on sabbatical, the ministerial intern, Seth Robinson, lit a candle for each person who died in the last year and who brought the congregation together in memory, solace and in love: Ilse Schenk, Charles Giles, Thomas Gerron, and Tony Monteiro. He gave thanks for their lives and invited the congregation to join him for a moment of silence. He then read a passage about our dependence on community by Rev. Peter Raible.

Article 1. Ann Manson, Chair, Board of Trustees, moved Article 1. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Article 2. Cheryl Bachelor, Board of Trustees, moved Article 2. The three new Trustees are Keith Wentzel, Steve Vail, and Lisa Tellekson, all with three-year-terms. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Article 3. Cheryl Bachelor moved Article 3. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Article 4. This article represents a purchase or sale and therefore requires 40% of members age 18 and over who have been members for more than 1 year. Peter Race moved to pass over this article, which was seconded and unanimously voted.

Caroline Cole requested an explanation. Debb Putnam said that this vote is about property that was gifted by Robert Stevens to North Parish and the congregation's gift to him of easement rights for utilities and sewer. North Parish paid \$1 for this real estate transaction to be recorded. In order to ratify this gift, the church needs a vote by 40% of members who are over 18 and have been members over one year. The deed has already been recorded and the property belongs to North Parish and is needed for our accessible walkway. There is just this official piece of housekeeping that needs to be done.

She explained that Center Realty Trust is considering the purchase of the Stevens' house, which is adjacent to the North Parish property, as a historic site. If that occurs, they may build a parking lot, which North Parish members could use!

Article 5. The Moderator explained that he usually reads each category of the budget. If anyone has a question about a line item, they should indicate that. Otherwise, the group will vote on that category.

Discussion revolved around three sections: Religious Education, Affiliations, and Operational funding draw from reserves.

North Parish is paying 25% of the Director of Religious Education's family health insurance premium as a starting point. The UUA guidelines recommend 50%. The 3% salary increase was questioned because the congregation is withdrawing 5.7% of its investment income and is not balancing its budget. Brian Elowe stated that last year, there were no raises, so the 3% is over a 2-year period. He explained that the Personnel Committee did extensive benchmarking. They felt that this amount was fair, appropriate and maybe a little behind standards in the rest of the world. He wanted to put this in the context that North Parish's total expenses are down for the coming year by \$8500. A comment was made that we should support our wonderful staff and maybe chip in for our coffee or for our UUA dues if we are overspending. The member said that it would be short-sighted not to support our staff as growing the church means bringing in young families. Another parent also praised the Religious Education Director and expressed her support.

Clarification was requested about the amount withdrawn from North Parish's investment account. 5.7% or \$43,130 will be taken from the \$757,000 investment account, which had grown from \$630,000 at the beginning of the year. Ann Manson added that if each of the 162 pledge units were increased by \$85, the church could decrease the 5.7% draw down to 4%. She also stated that the industry standard is to withdraw 4% or less from investments because there are years when accounts grow and years when they shrink.

Another member, Fred Glore, commented that discussions of balancing the budget have been going on for years and years. The North Parish is a Fair Share congregation, but the UUA does cut congregations some slack when they have been through a large capital campaign.

He moved an amendment that North Parish reduce its official contribution to the UUA and the Mass Bay District by \$12,800 less any additional annual pledges. It was seconded.

A question was asked about the negative ramifications of doing this. Gail Forsyth-Vail answered that giving our fair share is an ethical commitment, not a legal one. We gain from the free resources of the UUA. Donating our fair share dues is a moral, ethical, religious and spiritual commitment.

Bill Putnam, of the Stewardship Campaign, thanked everyone for their contributions but said that he thinks we have the capacity to pay our UUA dues. He has a dream that pledges will increase and challenged others to increase their pledge.

Another member stated that we received a \$3600 stipend to start our internship program because we are a Fair Share congregation.

Caroline Cole, Chair of Fundraising, put in a pitch for fundraising. The congregation needs to find some more ways to raise money.

Fred Glore said that he was impressed that the annual campaign pledges were down as little as they are. Several people pledged to increase their contributions for the coming year. The church needs an addition \$12,800 in pledges to decrease the drawdown from 5.7% to 4%.

Another member said that we pay UUA dues based on 342 members. Where are they all? A suggestion was made that the new young teen members can't contribute and maybe should change their memberships to inactive. It was noted that as part of the COA program, teens are informed of their responsibility to pledge and cover the cost of their UUA dues if they wish to be members.

Once this discussion ended, a vote was taken on the proposed amendment and was defeated by majority voice vote.

All the categories of the budget were approved by majority voice vote (most unanimously), and Peter Calkins requested that any additional pledges be emailed to him for recording.

He stated, as a representative of the Building Task Force, that the building project is on schedule with no major surprises. We do, however, need to upgrade the power supply to 3-phase power for the elevator and are having difficulty finding out the work schedule from National Grid. If anyone has a contact at National Grid, please let Debb Putnam know.

Ann Manson thanked the outgoing Trustees: Justin Nealey, Cheryl Bachelor and Brian Elowe.

Seth Robinson, our departing ministerial intern, said goodbye and thanked the congregation for extending warmth and trust to him. He said he would remember, "This is what a vibrant church community looks like."

Peter Race thanked John Middleton-Cox and Kim Adami for setting up his microphone and chair and adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Carbonell

Clerk

05-23-2014